

PERSONAL HISTORY
OF
JOHN MELVIN MOULTON

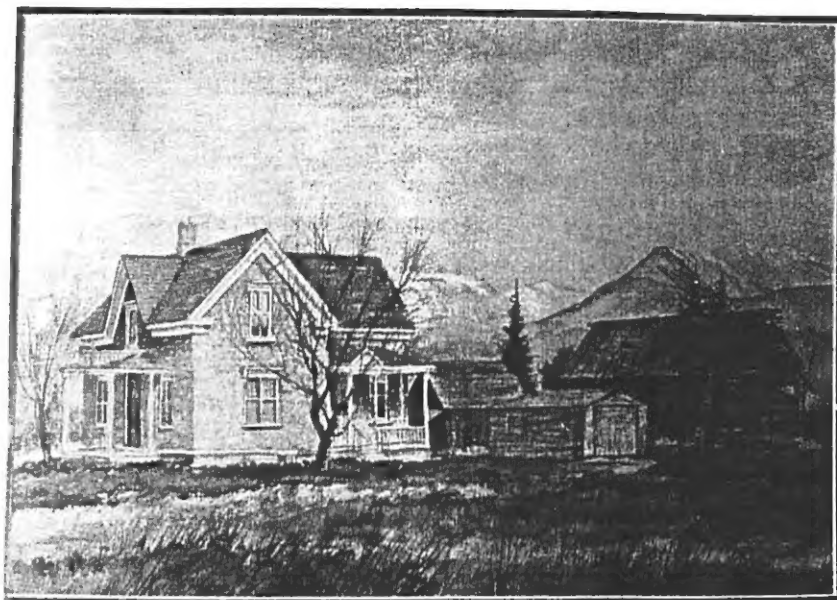
With Love to Michael and Ann, Christmas - 1996

I hope this personal history compiled
and edited by my sweetheart, Barbara,
gives you an insight into the past
of your Dad and his escapades!

John M. Moulton

HISTORY OF JOHN MELVIN MOULTON

[The First Seventy-Five Years]



The house I grew up in at 110 W. 200 N., Heber City.

My father was so proud of the birth of a new son that he couldn't wait to get up to the old Bank Building at Main and Center Streets where the town's farmers would gather to sit in the morning's warm sun on the bank window sills after the daily morning chores were done. It was the favorite spot to discuss the latest news and the local baloney and my father was eager to tell them his proud news.

My maternal Grandparents, John & Margaret Jane Young Van Wagoner, were equally as proud since I was their first grandchild even though their last child, Dale, was just seven months older. I wish I could have known my Grandfather Moulton but he had passed away six years earlier and Grandmother Moulton had quite a few grandchildren by then.

My parents had four more children after me: LaRae, seventeen months younger; Derial Leo, three years younger; Margie June, six years younger; Collene Annette, twelve and one-half years younger.

I was born the early spring morning of April 2, 1921 in Heber City in the house where we lived at the time. I was the first child of Ernest Dewey Moulton & Blanche Van Wagoner Moulton and weighed in at between six and seven pounds.

Aunt Maud Campbell, as she was affectionately known, and our dear neighbor who lived on the end of the block west of us was the mid-wife who helped bring me into this world.

Since both of my Grandfathers' names were John (John Ephraim Moulton & John Van Wagoner Jr.) there was no question as to what my first name would be.

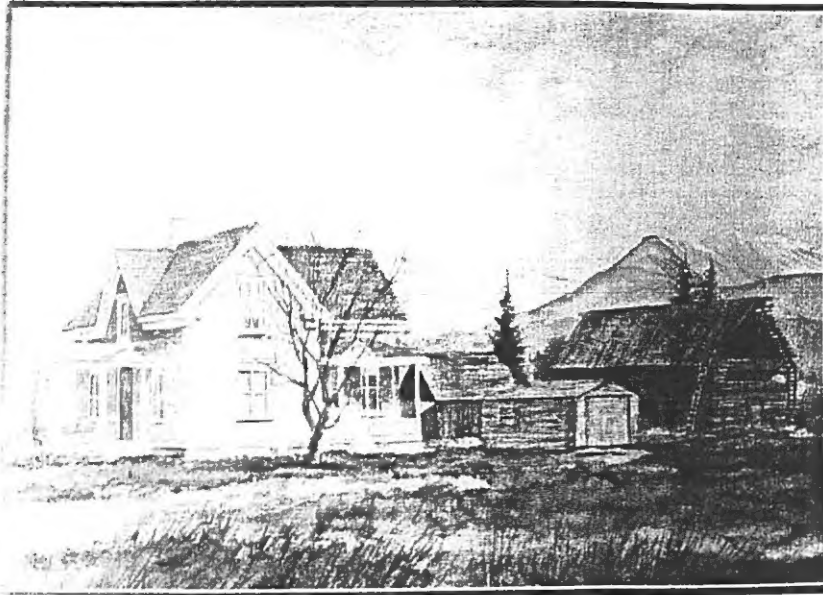
Melvin J. Ballard was an apostle in the Quorum of the Twelve at the time and was one of my mother's favorite church authorities so Melvin was chosen as my middle name, which I was known by as I grew up.



With mother at 2 or 3 months.

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With mother at 2 or 3 months.

My Dad about 1917 when he was attending school in Logan at Utah State Agricultural College. (Now Utah State University)



Blanche & Dewey Moulton
About 1920 soon after they
were married.

My Dad about 1917 when he was
attending school in Logan at Utah
State Agricultural College. (Now
Utah State University)



Blanche & Dewey Moulton
About 1920 soon after they
were married.

At that time there weren't many people who could afford or had the equipment to take a lot of pictures but here are a few of me through the years.



Melvin at six months.



With mother at 1½-2 years of age.



Three years old.

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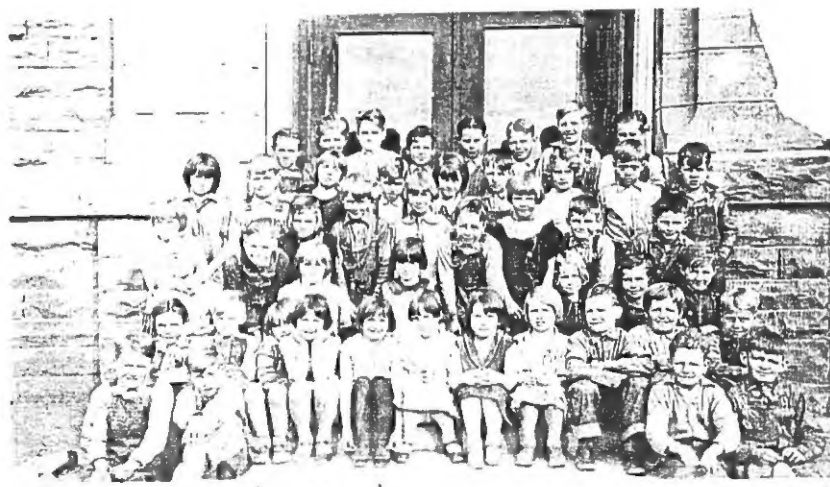
With mother at 1½-2 years of age.



Three years old.



About 1925 Blanche & Dewey Moulton holding LaRae (L.) about 2 years & Melvin (R.) about 4 years.



North School 2nd Grade about 1928.
Melvin is 4th row back from front and 2nd boy from right.



My mother's family: Front - Grandmother Margaret Jane Young Van Wagoner, Grandfather John Van Wagoner Jr., my mother. Back - My Uncles, Boyd, Kenneth, Leo, Dale, Reed (Tom) & Brig



Moulton Grandparents: John Ephraim Moulton & Isabell Thacker Moulton



My mother's family: Front - Grandmother Margaret Jane Young Van Wagoner, Grandfather John Van Wagoner Jr., my mother. Back - My Uncles, Boyd, Kenneth, Leo, Dale, Reed (Tom) & Brig



Moulton Grandparents: John Ephraim Moulton & Isabell Thacker Moulton

My childhood years were the normal, fun-loving, happy times with brother, sisters and friends playing the popular games of the times like "Run Sheep Run", "Kick the Can", "Hide & Go Seek", "Marbles" and "Tag".

We loved playing out in the big log barn that Grandfather Moulton had built, playing in the hay loft and climbing to every possible perch. When the barn was emptied of hay we would swing on the hay fork rope and pretend we were Tarzan on the flying trapeze. This fun activity would have to come to a stop when the summer's hay started to fill the barn again.

We would dig tunnels in the hay and crawl through them much to our dad's chagrin and chastising. But it was so much fun we would take our chances and sneak out to play in it again. It is a wonder we even survived without having a major catastrophe from the hay caving in and smothering us.

Another fun activity was to get a pair of steel-wheeled roller skates and as soon as the snow melted we could get out on the sidewalk and skate clear from Main Street past our house and to Fifth West. I think I wore two pair of skates out by the time I was twelve years old.

It was also a delight to take the skates apart, put each set of wheels on the end of a board to make a scooter with an upright wood handle and a crossbar to hold onto. Maybe my friends and I were the original inventors of the scooter—of sorts!

We raised and kept some chickens for our home use for the eggs & meat and found out how to get a special treat. By gathering a few eggs from some of the random nests the hens had made around the barnyard, we could take them up to Buell's Store on Main Street a block and one-half from our house to trade them for goodies of candy or cookies. He would "candle" them (a process of holding candlelight on the opposite side of the egg as you viewed it to see if they were free of baby chicks growing in them). When he determined they were good eggs he would allow us to pick our treats worth 1¢ to 3¢ per egg.

It was also fun to go to Add Averett's who had the best selection of penny candy in town. He would pull his glasses down on his nose to look over them and watch very impatiently as we took our time trying to decide which pieces we wanted for our few pennies. Each time we changed our minds and took longer he would growl a little louder and his glasses went a little farther down his nose.

We also kept two to six cows for our home use and to sell some of the milk each day to the Creamery to supplement our family's living expenses.

I still remember the feel of the fresh warm milk on my face as Dad was milking the cows and told me to open my mouth as he would take aim with the cow's teet and try to hit the target with the fresh milk. As I grew into the milking age I took Dad's example and tried the same thing with my younger brother and sisters or with the cats (they loved it).

At about age six or seven after the 10-gallon can of milk was loaded in my little wagon each morning, I pulled it to the creamery one block away where they used it to make cheese. After the milk was emptied the workers would fill the can with whey that I would pull back home to feed the pigs. I had a real advantage over my cousin, Barton Moulton, because he had to pull his wagon three blocks with the cans of milk in it.

At a very young age I was given the responsibility of getting the kindling wood and coal to the house morning and night for the two coal-wood burning stoves used for cooking & heating.

From six years of age and on my dad would have me go to the fields with him to learn about the fundamentals of farming and the necessity to learn how to work at an early age. He taught me how to irrigate the land, harvest the hay and crops and how to take care of animals. At that early age I would have much rather been playing with my friends.

One of the great joys through those years was being able to leave the hay fields on a hot summer day after both men and horses were exhausted and proceed to the closest canal or to our favorite swimming hole on the Provo River not too far from our North Fields acreage. How refreshing to strip off and dive into the cool waters with Derial, cousin Barton and other hayfield helpers. This almost made the dirty hot sweaty work of the hay fields worthwhile.

My mother started me with piano lessons at about age ten but when they needed me in the hayfield in the summer time it was hard getting home for the piano lessons. So the work pressures and Uncle Addison not taking too kindly to my leaving the work eventually forced me

to quit. My piano teacher, Geneva Wilson, was disappointed because she thought I was doing quite well. Through the years as I have thought back on it I wished I would have had more enthusiasm and determination, but riding my horse clear home from the North Fields for the lesson and then back again dimmed my enthusiasm.

There were always more chores to do after we arrived home from the hay fields such as feeding the horses, cows, pigs and chickens.

I had my own Welch pony named "Gyp" and had many hours of fun riding on her back. She earned her name rightfully by gypping us out of rides by unexpectedly shifting sideways or coming to a quick stop, putting us on the hard ground either over her head or off the side.

"Gyp" had a female colt born on the fourth of July that we named "Julie". She also grew up into a very choice riding pony.

Dad had a riding horse named "Old Kirb" (that he had purchased from Kirb Mair) that was hard to catch to bridle until we found we could trick him into coming to us in the corral when he found out we had a slice of bread with cream and sugar on it. He was then easy to put the bridle on him so we could ride him and he was a good saddle horse.

One of mine and Derial's favorite things to do in the summertime was to sleep out under the stars in the old "white-top" buggy that was sitting on the north side of our house. That was a pleasant change from our hot upstairs bedroom.

But our frigid bedroom with no heat at all in the winter was far from comfortable and fun. Our mother heated cobblestones (about a 10 lb. size), wrapped them in old thin blanket pieces and we each had one to put our feet on to help take the cold bite out of our frigid bed.

There were two other cold bedrooms upstairs for the girls and a big dark closet that we children hid in and played in many times in our games together.

In our downstairs after a flight of very steep stairs (without a handrail until I put one on after I had left home) was the master bedroom, living room with a fireplace, big dining room, kitchen and bathroom.

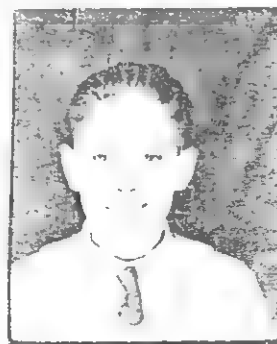
We really enjoyed the fireplace which was generally only used at Christmas time, but Dad got the notion to close it off and put a front on it because of the fire hazard it posed from the bricks that had fallen off the chimney on top. So we couldn't enjoy our cozy fire on Christmas morning any more.

We also had a "two-holer" toilet outside from by-gone days in the barnyard area between the pig pen and the chicken coop. That way the pigs got the blame sometimes for the smelly area of the barnyard. Of course with the inside bathroom we didn't accommodate the outside "privy" very much in the wintertime.

The thing I remember most about it was when the spring season rolled around and the tiny red spider mites were thick on the seat. They had a bite that would really sting. So we took coal oil out to wipe the seats and try to eradicate the mites.



I'm the runt on the left
with Doyle Young & Bud
Hegyessy. About 12 yrs.



About 14 years old.

As I grew older to the basketball age I mounted a hoop out on the city light pole just north of our garage and the neighborhood boys would gather. We spent many hours in competition in rough and tough games with each other. The dust off the ground around the pole would get quite thick at times. Even our dads and older boys would join in with us when they could.

Some of my special friends and neighbors at this time to join in the fun were Billie Nelson, Max Epperson, Jay and Carl Buell.

I grew up being creative making my own toys out of necessity because they say "Necessity is the mother of invention" and because of no money to buy wanted toys. I did have more toys that my parents bought for me than some children had but by making them I had more variety.

When I recall my memories of school days, I well remember my first day of school when my mother sent me to school in knickerbockers because she thought I "looked cute" and that was the style for some boys at the time. I thought they looked sissy and I hated them with a passion. I don't think she ever got them on me again after that day.

I also remember my second grade well because my teacher, Nellie Cummings (Adamson later on), gave me a birthday party. I went to school the day before feeling badly saying my mother couldn't give me a party, so on my birthday she had a surprise party for me in class. The most treasured birthday gift I received for many years was the little leather pocket coin purse that she gave me that day. I regret that I never did tell Miss Cummings in later years how much that party and coin purse meant to me.



I completed the six years at North School at 200 North 100 East in Heber City with LaVon Bond and Walter Harrison as two of my favorite teachers.

After grade school we went to Junior High School which was combined with Senior High School in grades seven to twelve at Wasatch High School on Main Street between second and third south where the city park is located now. The Seminary Building was on the same block just north of the High School and Wendell Rigby was my teacher.

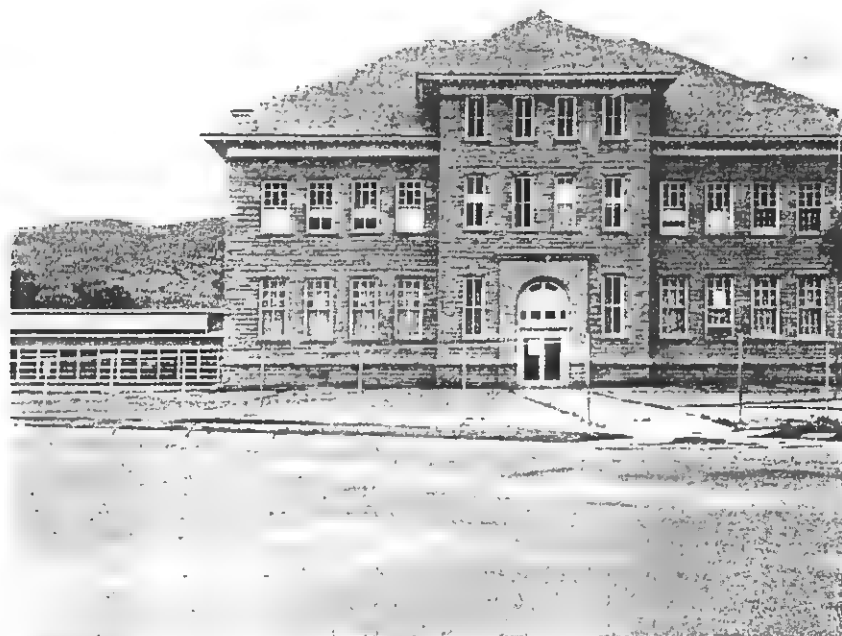
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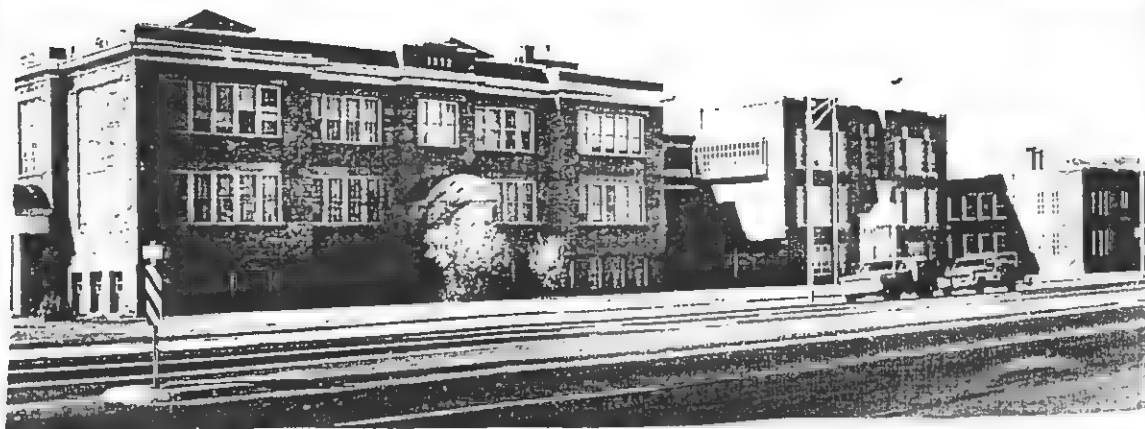
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Wasatch High School built in 1912 with Wasatch Stake Seminary building on right.

My favorite classes in both Junior High and High School were the vocational classes in woodwork, farm mechanics, tin smithing and also history and math classes. English wasn't a favorite (with Nell Ohlweiler as teacher) but it should have been.

I built my first shop on the north side of Dad's garage when I was about 10th grade scavenging boards wherever I could find them to build it. Many hours were spent getting and making equipment for my shop where I spent countless enjoyable hours.

As I grew older to driving age I was eager to get my driver's license although I had been driving for some time before then to the fields and along the back roads. It didn't seem to matter too much then if the farm boys were driving around. Dad had bought a brand new 1929 Chevrolet car and that was the first vehicle that I learned to drive.

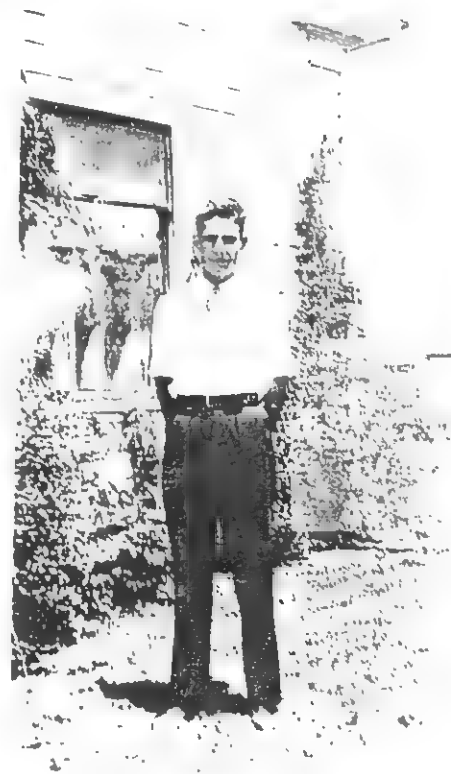
When I turned sixteen in 1937 Dad purchased a new 1937 Chevrolet car and that was the one I drove to get my driver's license. Later on LaRae and I proved that the car would do 70-75 MPH on the straight-away but I became a little frightened and decided that was fast enough. I don't think Dad ever found out about that little escapade because LaRae nor I ever taltled.

Dating wasn't a habit with me in high school but I did do a little with Lavern Stone as the first girl I ever dated and dated with Katherine Read a few times.

I enjoyed time with my friends, Max Foster, Emmett Miller and Eldon Hansen.

It was with Max and Elden that I took a trip to Yellowstone right after graduation in Max's little yellow Ford Roadster. Our first night there when we pulled into where we wanted to camp about midnight, the moon was shining brightly and we thought we had found a glimmering lake. When we awoke in daylight the glimmering glow turned out to be shiny cans in the garbage dump.

We didn't seem to be afraid of the bears as we camped out under the stars each night for the week we were there.



About H. S. Graduation time
1939 - 18 years old.



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The highlight and near calamity of the trip happened when we tried to pass a car in the wrong place. We were following an older couple who wasn't traveling the speed we thought they should and Max impatiently passed them. Suddenly there was an unexpected curve and Max slammed on the brakes, we spun in the road, rolled off the embankment backwards down through the trees and with either being lucky or good steering did not hit any trees as we went between them.

The only damage incurred was the fact that a box of fishing worms on one running board and the camp stove on the other, both sticking out a little too far, were wiped off and mutilated by the trees on each side without causing any damage to the car.

The people that we had passed stopped and looked, saw that we were okay, looked at us with disgust, shook their heads and drove away. We salvaged the worms that we could, picked up Max's dad's camp stove in pieces, then with Max driving and Elden & I pushing we got the car back up on the road and went on our merry way to enjoy the park and the rest of our trip.

I never purchased my first car until about four months after graduation. I took the \$85.00 that I had earned and saved over quite a few months time and with the cash in my pocket I hitchhiked a ride from the north end of town into downtown Salt Lake to Capitol Chevrolet car dealership. I knew what I wanted and they had the car of my dreams--a 1929 Model A Ford Roadster convertible with a "rumble seat". I was so proud of that neat little red car as I drove back towards Heber, just barely making it over Darley's Summit because it had a miss in the engine and steamed all the way over the top of the summit.

The car salesman had it priced at \$90.00 and I told him he would either have to take \$80.00 or forget it. I needed the other \$5.00 to get home. So he said, "I'll take the \$80.00". My bargaining ability ("jeweling") started at a young age.

Many fun hours were spent driving the Roadster and repairing it to take the miss out of it. I had it for several years until such time that I left home to go to Tacoma, Washington to work in the shipyards. Derial took it over and I lost track of what happened to the car and what he did with it, but I would love to have it to work on and restore it today.

In the summer after high school graduation I worked for Nephi Moulton in his blacksmith machine shop learning blacksmithing, welding, wheelwright work and various other trades.

Towards fall I took a bus to California to see Dad's cousin, Van Ness Dearson, who along with her husband owned a Dude Ranch along the Kings River northeast of Fresno. I ended up being her chauffeur around Los Angeles and California but that didn't last too long because I never enjoyed it and came back home to enroll at the Trade Tech School in Provo in Sept.

After the school year of 1939-40 I went to Tacoma, Washington to work in the shipyards for about six months. I felt like my draft number (the numbers in order that the government military would draft you into the service during World War II) was coming up and I wanted to go home and spend some time there before the service.

When I arrived home I found out my draft number was quite high on the list and I wouldn't be drafted for some time. So I went to Ogden and found employment at the Ogden Iron Works. I lived with LaRae & Emmett at Washington Terrace and slept out in their little sun porch. In about three months my draft number did come up & I went home to prepare to enter the service on Dec. 10, 1942.

Twelve other local fellows were drafted at the same time and we boarded the Trailways bus together in Heber to go to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City for induction.

The routine physical examination and shots were the first things on the list. I unfortunately got the "G.I. Montezuma Revenge" caused by the chicken which the dumb K.D. help had washed in G.I. soap causing several barracks of soldiers to be sick. A lineup of sick soldiers existed at every commode and some just plain couldn't wait for their turn.



Wasatch County draftees who entered the service on Dec. 10, 1942.
 L. to R. - Lawrence Bates, Lynn Epperson, Jerry Gertsch, Noble Schneitter, Elroy Van Wagoner, Ivan Draper, Harris Parcell, Dale Mahoney, John Melvin Moulton, Doyle Smith, Edgar Davis, Wilson Fisher and Boyd Lawton.

After a short time at Fort Douglas we were loaded on a train and sent to Camp Adair, Oregon, close to Corvallis. We received a lot of basic training there where I was assigned to Headquarters Battery of the 385th Field Artillery Battalion and went on maneuvers to Yakima, Washington. From there we went to Bend, Oregon for training in night-time attacks. We were part of the 104th Timberwolf Division.

After six months training in the Camp Adair area we were sent by train to Camp Carson, Colorado, outside Colorado Springs, where we received various other types of training. I was able to get home with weekend passes from Camp Carson on two different occasions.

Several of us decided to take our chances on by-passing the MPs without proper authority to leave the area outside our pass and go home. We knew we were going overseas to the battle area and decided it was worth the chance of getting home one more time. I can't believe I had that much nerve then.

Another thing I remember while at Camp Carson was my climb straight up the face of 14,110 foot Pikes Peak mountain. After the short ride on the cograil incline car as far as it went I climbed off and started the tedious hike with my good friend, Capt. Allen Hatch and others. I was determined I would make it when the majority gave up. I wouldn't allow myself as a Corporal to be outdone by Captain Hatch or any others and my determination & persistence paid off when I reached the top.

Then I was sent to Camp Horne, Arizona, about fifty miles out from Phoenix. I remember making one trip into Mesa with Army buddy, Kermit LeRoy McCutcheon, and Ivan Draper to see Don and Irene Duke, former residents and friends from Heber. They insisted on our staying with them instead of getting a motel and we slept on their small living room floor. Ivan was in the Motor Pool and had managed to get a jeep for us to use. Irene fed us breakfast the next morning and I gave Don a pocket knife that I had purchased at the PX (a military store) which he prized all his life and still thanked me for it years later when Barbara and I visited them.

We were a little later leaving the Dukes than we should have been and while Ivan was speeding too fast the Military Police spotted us and followed in pursuit. But Ivan had that jeep tuned to a "nat's ear" and they couldn't keep up with us!

Our next base was Camp Hyder near Yuma, Arizona, about 68 miles from Mexicali, Calif. close to the Mexican border. I still remember the breakfast specialty at a restaurant in Mexicali--scrambled eggs and brains, which I've never tried since then.

The training at Camp Hyder included desert training and on some mornings when I awoke to roll up my bedroll I found an occasional scorpion who had crawled under my bedroll for the warmth found there. Another thing I remember about Camp Hyder were the kangaroo rats which became quite friendly and would even eat out of your hand. They really did resemble a little kangaroo. I remember Jack Lombard feeding one and it happened to sink its teeth into his thumb to get a tastier bite. It was no longer his friend when he flung it against the side of the tent.

I shipped out of Camp Hyder in Aug. 1944 by train to go across the country to New Jersey where I boarded the Troop ship, USS Monterey, to sail for Cherbourg, France. By this time only Harris Darcell and Dale Mahoney from the original Wasatch County Inductees were with me in the 104th Timberwolf Division.

I had advanced to the rank of a Corporal by the time I shipped overseas. My military "dogtag" SN that I will never forget was #39903944. I prayed that military personnel would never have to refer to it because of casualty reasons.



Below: My family on my first furlough home.
Front: Dad, Collene, Mother
Back: Melvin, LaRae, Margie, Derial



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Front: Dad, Collene, Mother
Back: Melvin, LaRae, Margie, Derial



Our ship was the first load of troops to go directly into Cherbourg, France on the Normandy Coast from the U.S. All the rest had gone to England first to prepare to cross the English Channel after General Eisenhower had directed the first fighting troops into France on "D-Day" on June 6, 1944 to fight the Germans who had taken over part of France.

Cherbourg was a quaint little French village and I had a little old shoemaker carve a wooden pair of Dutch shoes and he dated them on the bottom with Sept. 16, 1944 (exactly two years before my wedding date).

As our troops proceeded inland to Saint Lo there wasn't a building left standing that the Germans hadn't bombed and the city was completely leveled. As we proceeded farther inland I did get to see some of Paris on a short pass before our division drove more north towards Reims, France and towards Belgium.

Another incident coming out of France that I recall was when I was lead vehicle in an ammunition convoy as a Buck Sergeant. We had driven so many hours without sleep and in the middle of the night I must have been half asleep. I came to as I was bouncing along the railroad ties on the train track running parallel with the road. All the convoy was following like a herd of sheep. The Lieutenant in charge made us all fix some G.I. C-ration coffee and drink it to keep us awake. That's the one and only time I ever attempted to drink that black mud!

From there we went into Belgium where we didn't meet up with the opposition and wasn't under fire. We were able to visit Brussels, the capital city, without being fired on. But when we arrived in Holland we were crawling most of the way on our face and chest under heavy fire. Holland is a land of many dikes—it's true because I crawled over many of them. I found out at this time that I was very near the place in Holland where Lynn Epperson from Midway was killed by the German Army.

While in Holland one of my good buddies by the name of Dowell was shot and killed by a sniper hiding in a haystack. The sniper fire from there had us pinned down for several hours before the haystack was eliminated with artillery fire that we had called for from Battery Headquarters. I could have been killed easily as the sniper fire came very close to me—too close for comfort.

While in Holland after being heavily shelled by the Germans I was brave enough to look up from the ditch full of water I was lying in only to see a German soldier with his arm blown off. My first thought as I aimed my rifle at him was to kill him as I had been trained to do. But I could not force myself to pull the trigger and had to leave him for the Paramedics to pick up and be taken as a POW (Prisoner of War).

It was at this point that we called back via the telephone wires we had strung to have artillery fire adjusted to hit German forces in a wooded area. We had called for a "fuse quick" (one that would explode above the trees showering shrapnel in all directions) and the first hit too close to us for comfort. Our next message back told them to correct their fire and gave them direction again. The second "fuse quick" hit on target and really flushed the Germans out of the trees where some were killed and some surrendered. This shell fire that we directed from our artillery guns saved our lives for sure.

After the Holland Campaign we moved on through into Germany to the Siegfried Line in the Aachen sector for the impending drive to the Roer River. The Siegfried Line was made up of heavy cement pillars, each one shaped like a pyramid which stretched for miles and miles to protect Germany from tanks and other equipment entering. We managed to make it through and as soon as we arrived there it seemed "all hell broke loose". I wasn't sure I would ever make it out of there alive. It was only by the grace of God that I did make it.

Artillery fire was bursting around us in every direction as we tried to lay telephone wires between our Headquarters Battery and our forward observing post where I was serving.

We would always seek the best point for observation and a church steeple was the best we could find in Aachen. I had been in the top of the steeple directing artillery fire on German bunkers (underground cement positions where the enemy could direct artillery fire on our positions) when shelling directed from the bunker knocked the church steeple totally off. I had just barely left that position. Once again the good Lord saved my life.

We adjusted our fire in all areas around the bunker that allowed one of our infantry men